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UNCLAS TEGUCIGALPA 002373

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR PM, WHA/CEN, WHA/PPC, AND WHA/USOAS

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SUBJECT: HONDURAS DECLARED MINE FREE

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 02131

1. On Friday, October 8, the Government of Honduras (GOH) convened a ceremony at the Headquarters of the First Infantry Battalion (Primer Batallon de Infanteria) on the outskirts of Tegucigalpa to officially declare Honduras mine free. U.S. participation in the demining efforts was directed through the Assistance Mission for Mine Clearance in Central America (MARMINCA), which coordinated through the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Inter-American Defense Board (IADB). Mine clearance began in 1994 and lasted a total of nine years. The demining team finalized its work along the Honduras/Nicaragua border, specifically focusing on the wartime remnants left over from the Central American civil wars of the 1980s. There has been no confirmed findings of mines in Honduras since June 30, 2004.

2. The team was responsible for cleaning an area that totaled nearly 1,479 square kilometers. All told, the program resulted in the removal of approximately 2,191 mines, 214 explosive artifacts, and 60,521 pieces of war refuse. With the land now clear of danger, the GOH estimates that more than 67,000 families will likely move into the area and start farming.

3. Nonetheless, IADB personnel report that due to Hurricane Mitch, there may be some deep-seated mines that have yet to be discovered. These mines would only pose a potential problem if the area were to undergo major construction projects, which could disturb and perhaps set off the mines.

4. The Ambassadors of Germany, Denmark, Spain, France, and Italy were present at the ceremony; PolMilOff attended the ceremony for the Embassy.  
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